

Message Text

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FM AMEMBASSY SEOUL

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 0183

INFO AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

AMEMBASSY TOKYO

C O N F I D E N T I A L SEOUL 8503

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR JA KS UR

SUBJ: SAKHALIN KOREANS AS JAPAN-KOREA BILATERAL ISSUE

REF: (A) SEOUL 4224, (B) TOKYO 8648, (C) MOSCOW 9938,
(D) SEOUL 5104, (E) TOKYO 15729

1. ROKS APPEAR TO BE PREPARED TO CLEAR WAY FOR SAKHALIN KOREANS TO COME TO JAPAN AND/OR TO SOUTH KOREA SHOULD THE SOVIETS EVENTUALLY ALLOW THESE PEOPLE TO LEAVE SAKHALIN. MOFA ASIA BUREAU DIRECTOR O CHAE-HUI TOLD POLCOUNS OCTOBER 22 THAT ROK EMBASSY TOKYO HAD JUST BEEN INSTRUCTED TO INFORM JAPANESE FOREIGN MINISTRY ROKG WILL COVER COSTS OF SEVERAL DAYS SOJOURN IN JAPAN AND TRANSPORTATION TO KOREA OF ANY SAKHALIN KOREANS WHO WISHED TO REPATRIATE TO ROK. O SAID ROKG HAD BEEN INFORMED BY JAPANESE THAT EARLIER THIS YEAR ROUGHLY 300 KOREANS IN SAKHALIN HAD APPLIED FOR TRANSIT VISAS TO GO TO JAPAN AND THAT ROKG HAD ALREADY PROVIDED JAPANESE WITH SECURITY CLEARANCES FOR 151 OF THESE SHOULD THEY EVENTUALLY BE RELEASED. SECURITY CLEARANCES FOR OTHERS ARE BEING PROCESSED.

2. ROKS FIGURED THAT COSTS FOR MOVING 300 PERSONS THROUGH JAPAN AND TO KOREA WOULD BE IN THE NEIGHBORHOOD OF \$340,000. KOREANS, O SAID, HAD ATTEMPTED TO GET JAPANESE TO PAY AT LEAST SOME
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PORTION OF THIS COST AS MATTER OF PRINCIPLE AND AS A WAY

OF AMELIORATING "BITTER FEELINGS OF KOREANS" REGARDING JAPANESE
ROLE IN SENDING KOREANS TO SAKHALIN IN THE FIRST INSTANCE.
KOREANS, SAID O WITH CHARGIN, WILL NO LONGER INSIST ON THIS
MATERIAL GESTURE OF COOPERATION.

3. O WAS NOT SURE ABOUT CHANCES AND TIMING OF RELEASE. IN RESPONSE
TO A LETTER FROM A "PRIVATE CITIZEN" IN JAPAN EARLIER THIS YEAR
1700 SAKHALIN KOREANS RESPONDED THAT THEY WANTED TO COME OUT.
KOREANS HAVE GIVEN THIS LIST TO JAPANESE AND ALSO INTERNATIONAL
RED CROSS. IN MEANTIME SOVIETS APPARENTLY HAVE RELEASED ONE
KHJEAN, A SOVIET CITIZEN ACTUALLY, WHO AFTER SPENDING A MONTH
IN JAPAN EARLIER THIS YEAR (AND CHECKING IN WITH SOVIET EMBASSY
AS SOVIETS REQUESTED) HAS RETURNED TO SOUTH KOREA. ALSO, O
SAID, ROKG HAD INFORMATION THAT EARLY THIS YEAR RUSSIANS
HAD MADE ANNOUNCEMENT IN SAKHALIN THAT KOREANS WOULD BE ALLOWED
TO REPATRIATE BUT AFTER "MONTH'S CONFUSION" WHEN MANY KOREANS
SHOWED UP AT APPROPRIATE SOVIET OFFICES REQUESTING TO LEAVE THE
SOVIETS HAD STOPPED THE PROCEDURE. ACCORDING UNCONFIRMED SOURCES,
SAID O, A NORTH KOREAN AGENT HAD APPEARED IN SAKHALIN AT THE TIME
AND APPARENTLY HAD ALMOST BEEN KILLED WHEN HE TRIED TO PERSUADE
THE KOREAN FAMILIES NOT TO ATTEMPT TO LEAVE.

4. O NOTED IN CONCLUSION THAT ROKG HAD DESIRED TO KEEP ISSUE
QUIET ON GROUNDS PUBLICITY WOULD EVOKE INCREASED NORTH KOREAN
PRESSURE ON SOVIETS TO HALT RELEASE. KOREANS CONSEQUENTLY
CONCERNED ABOUT JAPANESE FORMIN KOSAKA'S RECENT STATEMENT ON
SUBJECT IN DIET.
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